



HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Person-Thing Orientation in Purdue Extension Educator

Student researcher: Ang Cao, Junior

Past research demonstrated that there are individual differences in a construct known as person-thing orientation (PO-TO), which describes tendencies to orient more toward people versus things, according to a 1972 unpublished manuscript titled *Person-Thing Orientation: A Provisional Manual for the T-P Scale*, by Brian Richard Little. Interestingly, recent research published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* by Anna Woodcock and colleagues in 2012 has shown that PO-TO relates to student choice of major. For example, those high in thing orientation (TO) were more likely to enroll in a STEM major if they were also low in person orientation (PO). The current research takes a pioneering step by exploring PO-TO of educators rather than students. This work tests whether Purdue Extension educators vary in PO-TO depending on discipline. Participants are asked to respond to the PO-TO scale and to report their Extension area in addition to gender and degree discipline. A two (gender: male vs. female) by

five (discipline: 4-H youth development vs. health and human sciences vs. agriculture and natural resources vs. economic and community development vs. horticulture) analysis of variance will be conducted to test differences in PO-TO scores across discipline and gender. It is hypothesized that educators in agriculture and natural resources and horticulture will tend to be higher in TO than other content areas; and based on past research, it is expected that men will tend to be more TO as compared to women, who are expected to be higher in PO. If PO-TO varies by extension discipline, then we might improve educational impact by supplementing content material in the dimensions less strong. Future research will test efficiency of student-teacher matches in terms of learning outcomes.

Research advisor Meghan Norris writes, "Ang is a DURI student learning to conduct interdisciplinary research. Person-thing orientation (PO-TO) is a psychological construct recently demonstrated as consequential in student success, but little is known about educator orientation. Ang's work is an initial step toward understanding educator orientation by exploring differences in PO-TO among extension educators."

Cao, A. (2013). Person-thing orientation in Purdue Extension educator. *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research*, 3, 92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284315167>